

“I’m Bored.”

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Love. I never really got love. At least not in the sense that had been portrayed to me through years of cheesy movies and happy endings. I had been in relationships of course, but they never had that feeling of all consuming passion and warmth that people talked about when they brought up love.

I don’t think Samantha had ever been in love either. I think it was harder for her, being that damn beautiful. It’s easy for people to project onto to beautiful, to fill that vessel with all their hopes and dreams and ignore everything else. And boy was she beautiful. More than pretty, more than sexy, Sam’s beauty transcended time, broke past barriers of nationality or race. It didn’t matter if you were looking into a painting from the sixteenth century or a photo taken yesterday, one look at a face like that and you were hopelessly lost, drowning in fantasies of holding it near. Many a man, and a few women, had fallen into that stare. Time slipping by as their tongues fumbled to produce speech.

She had these sleek brown eyes that glowed with slowly burning embers of intelligence and wisdom. Smooth caramel colored skin that could give her a “girl next door” appearance anywhere in the world. And that smile. A simple movement of lips and teeth that would suck the air right out of your lungs as it melted your knees. She was everything I could have ever wanted in a woman.

I knew Sam long before she ever knew me. I guess that’s pretty common when you’re a famous actress. Sam got her big break on a popular teen drama. I watched the show religiously, tuning in every week to watch those far too beautiful to be real actors pretend to have real problems. It wasn’t easy for Sam to build a strong reputation on a show that only gave her sophomore confessions of love and line after line comforting the hero.

After four years she had enough and moved on to mixed success in the movies. It seemed each movie brought worse writing than the last. She could act with the best of them, but was never given scenes to prove it. All anyone wanted to give her was role after role of the supportive girlfriend. Movie after movie of Sam putting on her best, fake, reassuring smile and patting the leading man on the shoulder. Scene after scene of the big kiss after the bad guy had been defeated, or the romantic crises averted. I think during those years she was beginning to lose hope of ever getting the roles she deserved.

Maybe that was why she went back into TV, where we met. I was a writer on a new TV show. It was a risky project. Big ensemble cast and the budget to go with them. We hadn’t even

finished the pilot and already the town was starting to buzz with anticipation for the show. Sam had taken a smaller role than she was used to, but one with lots of room to grow. It was outside of her normal genre and to be honest, I think it was her last roll of the dice. A chance to either break out of the mold this town was determined to stick her in or watch her career burn in the process.

I didn't know her in those days. We didn't really talk and it would be a stretch by anyone's definition to call us friends. But I still felt that attraction, that pull. Soon I would know every inch of her.

As the show went on, a group developed of the cast and crew that would hang out after work. Shoots could go late into the night, leaving us utterly exhausted and loathing the thought of having to cook anything. There was a bar/diner not far from the studio that became the regular hang out for a core group that I belonged to that met almost every day. In addition there was an outer ring of rotating guest stars that would hang out once or twice a week, of which Sam was a part of.

I, like every other heterosexual male on the planet, had at one time or another considered asking her out. How could you not? Even if she couldn't make dinner conversation anyone would be content to spend the evening staring into those eyes over a candle light dinner. Most men who built up the courage tended to back down after learning there was more to Samantha than a pretty face. On top of being a talented actress, she was startlingly intelligent, funny and disarmingly sweet. Those who braved the dangers were gently let down, always with a sympathetic smile and a soft touch.

I on the other hand was smart enough to know my day dreams for the fantasies they were. The first time I asked a girl out, way back in high school, I choked on the soda I was drinking and nearly passed out. Though I had a girlfriend here or there, I never got past the fear of righteously fucking up the initial approach. I was a smart guy, often bordering on arrogant, and knew my chances were somewhere in the realm of absolute zero. And when I say absolute zero I don't mean the percentage, I mean the temperature. Where it's so cold entropy reaches its minimum value and everything stops. Flying pigs having a snowball fight in hell had a better shot of asking her out than I did.

Thankfully, I didn't have to.

One night after work the usual gang was hanging out at the usual spot. A few from the outer circle, including Sam, had decided to join us. The network had picked us up for six episodes based on the positive buzz surrounding the pilot, and everyone was in a good mood. Things were winding down and people started to drift out. People at these things tend to leave in two's or three's until there's one poor sap sitting by himself. I always make sure I am not that sap.

As the night wound down I decided to make my break for it. I made some lame excuse about wanting to get some writing done and headed out. I guess Sam saw her chance to escape and also said her goodbyes. We left to the mocking cat calls from our friends, cries of ooh la la and jokes about the affair we were no doubt having. If only those fools knew the truth.

I stepped out into the late spring night with a sigh of relief. I always felt a sense of freedom after leaving those gatherings, of having made a clean escape. I remember feeling my stomach tighten as Sam called me back from the door. A host of mundane thoughts flashed across my mind.

“Did I forget my phone? My wallet? Maybe she wants to split a cab.”

I turned around with my best attempt at a casual face. It was quickly discarded for one of surprise and confusion as I saw Sam standing there, arm outstretched with a business card in her hand. I remember taking it with the befuddled look of a child handed an object for the first time, their tiny brain struggling to comprehend its nature. I remember flipping it over to see her phone number scrawled on the back in black ink.

“You ever get bored, we should do dinner or something,” she said.

Her words were so casual, so effortless. My tongue decided to take up gymnastics in my mouth.

“I don’t, uh, I don’t really date,” finally tumbled out of my mouth.

“You don’t date? Yes you do! What the hell were you thinking? You idiot!”

My mind screamed and thrashed in rebellion against my foolish mouth. I couldn’t believe the colossal fuck up I was being. Here was a chance, an actual chance and I was blowing it. I felt the color drain from the world as my brain rejected the reality it found itself in. This couldn’t be happening; it had to be the sick nightmare of a cruel and unjust god.

And then, the most miraculous thing happened.

She gave me this look. A look that only women have mastered. Women who have spent their whole lives being desired by the pathetic mortals that surround them. It was the sexiest, most alluring glance that has ever been witnessed.

Sam looked up at me and said, "I wasn't asking for a date."

With a devilish grin she turned and walked away.

Gallons of blood rushed to my brain as I was caught in a whirlwind of thought.

"Did she mean sex? No way she meant sex, she meant dinner. As friends. But those eyes. No. She just wants to be better friends. That's it. She can't want to fuck you. No one wants to fuck you. You're so lanky and awkward and you've only had sex with like two different women. Yeah but she doesn't know that. Everyone knows it! That weird guy at the supermarket who steals dented cans knows it, your mother knows it, the whole damn world knows it. A virgin has better moves than you. At least they have an excuse you pathetic fuck. Call her. What? No. That's insane. Talking to yourself is insane. What's the worst that could happen? You're bored now. Call her. Call her call her caller caller, fuck!"

I stormed off toward my apartment. My brain swirled and danced in a soup of crazy. I tried to push it away only for the waters to surge back in, drowning me.

I am not ashamed to say that over the next few days I masturbated relentlessly to the thought of her. What else was I to do? I couldn't stop thinking about it. I found every photo from every shoot she'd ever done and bathed in a wave of nostalgia from those teenage days when I would hurriedly wank to the largely innocent fantasies I had of her. I was never one for the kinky stuff. The thought of tenderly kissing a woman's skin in the soft light of an evening lamp was usually enough to get me off.

Every time I would think of calling her. Of picking up the number and inviting her out for dinner or coffee. I'd butter her up with smooth compliments and astonish her with my vast intellect. We'd talk politics and history and music and everything would be perfect. She'd laugh at my jokes and do that lovely signature move of women everywhere, the light touch on the arm.

We would go back to her place, kissing and flirting the whole way. I'd wait till the elevator doors closed and pounce her, only to pretend like nothing had happened the minute the doors opened. She would laugh and pull me toward her apartment. She'd fumble with the keys as I'd wrap my arms around her, kissing down the nape of her neck.

We'd trip inside, pulling each other's clothes off as I shut the door with a smooth kick. She'd walk toward the bedroom, a single teasing finger daring me to follow. Her arms would wrap around my neck as we tumbled onto her bed. My lips would drift across her collar bone and she would moan my name.

Then I would feel the sudden release of orgasm as the fantasy faded and I was returned to my miserable life.

A little over a week went by. Nothing changed, everything continued as normal. The group still met after work. Samantha still circled in and out of it. Never a regular, never gone long enough to earn the title of stranger. She made no mention of the number, nor did she make any attempts to clarify or reiterate her original offer. Life went on.

Sometimes I'd be hanging out on set, talking to the director or another writer and I'd catch her looking at me from across the room. She'd give me that same sexy glance from that night, then turn back to the person she was talking to as if nothing happened. No one ever noticed. She seemed to move in her own little world, free of consequences. I began to wonder if I was imagining the whole thing, if I was losing my mind. I guess in some ways I was.

Then came that night, a Wednesday, I think. This new Thai place opened in town and the group wanted to try it. Practically everyone from both the core group and the outer circle was going, including Sam. I tried to get out of it, but they insisted. Said I was working too hard, the way I would flutter in and out of conversation. They thought I was stressed, when really it was the constant distraction of Sam. It was becoming a regular occurrence for a conversation to come to a screeching halt only for me to realize someone had asked me a question.

So I went. Figured I could reclaim some good will with the group, conduct maintenance on social bridges that needed repairing. It didn't work. I couldn't keep my eyes off her. She was so gorgeous. Wearing little makeup and a simple grey t-shirt after a long day's work, she was still hands down, the most gorgeous woman in there. And I say this about a place full of young, attractive actresses. People who are paid to be pretty and she outshined them all.

We played cat and mouse all night. Me staring at her, quickly looking away as she caught me. Me looking over as I caught her looking at me in the corner of my eye, only to turn and see her looking at someone else. She a skilled player, I'll give her that. The whole time we tried to hide it from the friends that surrounded us. A dance of espionage at a crowded table with the tension mounting higher and higher. When she was sure no one else was looking, when a new pitcher would arrive or someone dropped something, she'd lean forward and inch, tilt her head and give me those seductress' eyes.

Time would stop, my heart right along with it and everything would fade away. All the sounds, all the stress. All that remained was those eyes. That little curl of the lips in a smile only meant for me.

Then the pitcher would hit the table or we'd realize whose phone had been ringing and she'd turn away. Sam would jump right back into the conversation, nodding and laughing at the right bits as if she'd never left it.

I knew I had to do something. I could feel it building up inside of me. The passion, the blood, surging, pounding away. I wanted to sweep everything off the table, throw her down on it, rip her clothes off and take her right there in front of everyone. My innocent fantasies were becoming not so innocent. And I think she knew.

Once again the night wound down, everyone drifted out. As Sam left I felt the oddest mix of incomparable loss and total relief. For the first time I was the last sap at the table. I sat there, lost in thought, trying to figure out what the in the hell I was going to do. About an hour later I went home to write. Bleeding everything out on the page tended to clear things up in my head. Even if it was entirely unrelated, writing had a way of soothing the soul.

As the hours ticked by I found myself writing less and less, and thinking of calling her more and more. It was close to ten, and I knew we all had an early start tomorrow. I went over it again and again in my mind. Would she blow me off or set up a time for a date? Would she tell me that I had completely miss understood, or that it was too late, she had already met someone else. Would I screw up my only chance by saying something stupid?

It was ten thirty. I realized that by the time I got over there and we did our thing it would be after midnight. Neither one of us would get any real sleep. There's no way she'd go for that. You don't get to be that unspeakably beautiful by losing sleep. But those eyes, burned into my brain, calling out to me.

Eleven o' clock. I'm full of energy, pacing around my apartment, picking things up only to set them back down. I'm restless, hard, and all I can think about is sex. Sex with her. I haven't written anything in forty minutes. I need to get back to work. I decided to rub one out. That'll calm me down.

Eleven o' eight. For the first time in my life, masturbation didn't help.

Eleven fifteen and my phone is in my hand. There's far too much blood rushing through my body and I can't think straight. I debate between calling and sending a text.

I send the text message at eleven twenty three. It says simply, "I'm bored."

An eternity passes. My mind races.

"That's clever, right? Isn't that what she said? "If you're bored." Yeah, that's what she said, had to be what she said. What if she's asleep? Shit, what if I woke her? Woke her up in the middle of the night with a vague message about wanting to fuck her. Why am I such an idiot? Maybe I can un-send it? Way too late for that."

"What if she says yes? What if I'm terrible? What if I come before it's even started? She'll hate me, mock me, tell everyone. Doesn't matter, she won't say yes. How the hell could she say yes? I'm hideous. Ugly and stupid and I'll die alone because no one would ever want to have sex with such a pathetic-"

I receive a text message.

Eleven thirty one. It's from Sam. I open it so fast I nearly put my thumb through my phone. I open it to see her address and a time, about an hour from now.

I jumped off the couch so fast I knocked my coffee table over. A quick shower, body check and change later and I'm in the car. I'm shaking so hard I can't get the damn key in the ignition. I get it started and speed off.

I run into the gas station like a meth addict that can get high off anything. I trip over half the displays and manage to knock down not one, but two different shelves in my search for condoms. In my haste I grab a box of twenty and throw a wad of crumpled up bills at the cashier like he's some kind of leper.

I hop back in the car and fumble with damn box only for it to explode in my hand. It's suddenly raining condoms. I fling the box into the back seat and speed off into the night, swerving at demons only I can see as I try and stuff a handful of condoms into my pocket. A distant part of my brain is worried my penis may rip through my jeans before I get there.

I slide into the parking garage like a getaway driver after a bank heist. I damn near cut off my leg in a rush to shut the car door as I openly sprinted for the elevator. As the steal box climbs I do my best to steady my heart rate. The thought crosses my mind that I will get mere inches from her naked body only to suffer a massive heart attack and wake up to the cruel laughs of the torturous god that had been planning this all along.

The elevator doors open and it takes every remaining ounce of self-control I have left to walk to the door.

I knock. I wait. I am suddenly aware of my own breathing.

I hear the latch on the other side and have just long enough to worry that when she opens the door my heart will burst from chest and knock her unconscious.

The door opens. A soft golden light spills out into the hallway.

Her hair is still damp from the shower she recently finished. I can smell the most wonderful mixture of lilac and honey. Her body, shimmering in the golden light, is covered only by a green towel.

She takes a step back, and I enter. The door seems to shut of its own accord behind me.

There are no thoughts, no sounds. Only me, and that green towel.

My gaze drifts from the towel to her face. She gives me that look. Those eyes that make my blood boil with the lust of a savage.

Samantha drops the towel.

I'd be lying if I told you I remembered everything that happened after that. I remember rushing forward, my hands coming up to hold her face as I kissed her. Bouncing from wall to wall as our hands danced over each other's body. The vase getting knocked over and wondering why someone would put a little end table in such a narrow hallway. I remembered not caring at it hit the ground and shattered like a bomb. What my lips felt like as they slid over her neck, the bounce of the bed as we fell onto it. I remember it being the kind of sex where you worried if someone was going to call the cops because they couldn't tell if we were fucking or murdering one another. I remember hitting that zone where your brain turns off and every move you make is the right one. Where the thing in your hands becomes an extension of your body, an instrument for making art. But it's all a blur. Snapshots without focus, colors blended and smeared together.

What I do remember quite clearly, was what happened after. We were lying in bed, cuddling. A soft breeze came in through the window. I looked over at it and wondered if it had been open the whole time. Reasoned that it had to be, because no one got up to open it. Her head was resting on my chest; my fingers softly stroked her dark hair. Though I'd rather not know for sure, I'm nearly certain I had a big, stupid grin on my face. The sex had been better than I could have possibly dreamed, and I had performed better than I could have ever wished. I had been terrified of coming to early, but once in the moment I realized that when I did it would be over. And I wanted it to last forever.

There comes a moment in every cuddle when it ends. When you've had your fill and wish to move on to something else. To roll over and go to sleep or get up and get on with your day. After what seemed to be a very long time, that moment came for me. I was completely unsure of what to do. I had never really been in this situation before. Not with someone I wasn't dating.

I lied there, thinking it over and over.

"Do I leave? Will she be offended? Maybe she wants me to leave. Hell she's probably been waiting for it. My clothes are everywhere. Going to be real awkward trying to get dressed in front of her. Where's my shirt? Do I say I'll call her? Thanks doll, see you at the office? Doll? Who the hell says doll, what is this, the fifties? Fuck, just leave. You had sex with her. Sex. With her. You will never top this. This is the pinnacle of your stupid life. Get out before you fuck it up. But what if I can have sex with her again? What if I can be all smooth and suave and she likes me? What if I can pull this off? You won't pull it off sweating up her bed. Go, go, go.

I roll out of bed.

She settles with minimal effort onto the pillow I had been resting against. I slip on my underwear and glance over to see her watching me. I will carry that image with me until the day I die. Sam lying on her stomach, breast pressed into the pillow. The look of seduction in her eyes was gone, replaced by complete and total satisfaction. She looked more content than I have ever seen another human being.

I smile thinking about it even now, all these years later. She had this wonderful ability to disarm and console someone with only a look. Whatever panic or awkwardness had been in me vanished when I saw that look. I must have stood there for nearly a minute, jeans loosely held in one hand as I stared at her.

Eventually I snapped out of it, put my pants on and heading out into the hallway in search of my shirt. It was near the destroyed vase. After sliding it on I found myself at a loss as to what to do. When I ventured out in the hallway I had always intended to return. Now I was in the living room, fully dressed. Eventually I decided to simple walk out, shutting the door behind me.

The entire night neither one of us had spoken a word, only grunts and moans in the heat of the action. As I drove through the deserted city in the calm of the night I realized my brain was oddly still. There was no rush to analyze, no frantic replaying of the action to look for mistakes. It seemed Sam wasn't the only content one. I rolled down the windows and turned on the radio without paying mind to the station. A soft smile was on my lips, and the breeze was

drying the sweat in my hair. As I drove off toward home, the sounds of the oldies drifted through the car.

The next few weeks went by without incident. Work was a mess. The premier was fast approaching and everyone was busy making sure it would be perfect. I didn't have much time to talk to Sam, or her to me. With my earlier fear and awkwardness returning I certainly wasn't about to make time. Once or twice though we'd make eye contact. For a brief moment our eyes would linger on the other's, memories of that night would come pouring back only for someone would tap on my arm or get her attention and the spell would be broken.

As part of the big premier, the network had planned a worldwide tour to help promote the show in different markets. The whole cast would be flown around to different cities, put up in fancy hotels and spend their evenings dining at fine restaurants on someone else's dime. It was part perk, part reward for the extremely long hours everyone was putting in.

The first stop, after the big L.A. red carpet event was New York. The network went all out, renting out the ball room of a well-known hotel for a black tie after party. They invited critics, journalist, industry favorites and press, anyone they thought could put in a good word with the public.

Industry shindigs are fairly common in this line of work. Everyone develops their own strategies to get through the night without jamming the nearest sharp object in their eye. I tended to stick close to my friends, the same people I'd hang out with after work. Others, like Samantha, liked to network and mingle. They saw these nightmare parties as a chance to boost their careers. I preferred to count down the minutes until I could leave while still being considered as "putting in an appearance."

That night, the party was in full swing. It seemed every famous person in town was there, surrounded by a wall of press eager for the latest scoop. I was off to one side talking with a group of writers. I finished my drink and excused myself as I went to get another. On the way to the drink's table I saw Samantha and I were on a collision course. She was wearing a jaw dropping little black dress that every man in the place would be wishing was curled up on their floor. She was looking straight past me, as if I didn't even exist. What was I to expect, she was here for business. Or so I thought.

Samantha brushed past me, leaning in far enough to whisper in my ear without missing a step.

"I'm bored."

Even now the memory of it sends shivers down my spine. Instant boner. Instant. Now with karate chop action, spring loaded, fully functional penis.

I looked back at her in confusion. She gave me those seductress' eyes in a sidelong glance and suddenly veered for the doors. I wasn't sure what to do. Somehow my legs continued to carry my toward the drinks table. I ended up taking out my phone in some lame attempt at subterfuge. I practically skipped toward the doors.

As I emerged into the hotel hallway I saw Samantha father down, turning a corner, a brief glimpse of her bare back and shoulder to lure me in. I hurried down to where she'd turned, getting there just in time to see her turn another corner. This time she looked back, giving me those eyes and a daring smile.

I walked as fast as I could manage down the hall. As I turned the corner I felt this shadow move against me, pushing me into the wall. She was all over me. Kissing my neck, one hand running through my hair as the other ripped off my belt. I couldn't tell you if we were in a normal hallway, service corridor or a school bus full of nuns. I could tell you that her lips felt sublime as she kissed down my stomach. I could tell you how strong I felt as I pushed her up against the wall. How her arms clung to my neck as her legs wrapped around me. How her dress slid up those smooth legs and how perfectly we seemed to fit together when I entered her.

I always wanted to fuck a woman up against a wall. Guess I finally got my chance.

Again, no words were exchanged after the initial contact. When it was finished she pulled down her dress and I pulled up my pants. She was kind enough to wait until I had my belt together before slinking off back to her room. I always remembered that for some reason. With the adrenalin wearing off and the legions of press around, anyone would want to run. To escape the scene of the crime as fast as possible. But she waited.

I looked up as I finished fastening my belt. She gave me this little nod, and then disappeared down the hallway. Once again I was left standing there, with no idea what to do with myself. I ended up going to back to the party, thinking it would be suspicious if we left around the same time. I was smart enough to slide my phone back in my pocket as I entered the room, completing the illusion of a call. I slid back into my little circle of writers and rejoined the conversation. They barely noticed I was gone.

Paris. A city more hyped for its romantic beauty than any other in the world. I wasn't impressed. I think Sam had ruined things of beauty for me. They were never able to compare.

She may not have a large rack or a round ass, but I didn't care. To me, she was perfect. Every mole, every scar, every imperfection only added to the masterpiece. God could paint on the canvas of humanity for another million years and never top her.

Paris was the third stop after New York and London. France's capitol was not the best place to find hotel rooms and networks were not known for their foresight. Instead of the cast all being in one hotel we were scattered around the city in rooms of different size and quality. Someone upstairs must have liked me because I was one of the lucky few to score a room with the stereotypical view of the Eiffel Tower. Had to be an accident, no one liked me that much.

That night I took a picture of the view from my room, of the tower lit up against the night sky and sent it to Samantha with the caption: "I'm bored."

She texted back, "One hour."

When I opened the door, Sam stepped inside wearing a long brown coat. She smiled and slipped it off her shoulders, revealing the black lingerie she was wearing underneath. After some passionate kissing and a quick bout of foreplay, I shut off the lights and moved her to the window. It was one of those faux balconies, little more than a set of doors and a railing.

She leaned against the railing and I took her from behind. We fucked that night with a view most only dream of seeing. To be honest, I didn't care much for the tower. I spent most of the time staring down at her back as we rubbed together.

That was a good night.

Over the next five months things continued along the same path. A couple times a week one of us would text the phrase "I'm bored." to the other. The recipient would respond with a time and location. If for any reason the other person wasn't up for it, they wouldn't respond to the initial message and that would be the end of it. No hard feelings.

Work was pretty much the same, too. The show became a giant success and everyone continued working their asses off to make it even better. The same inner circle of friends would go out after work, and the same second stringers would rotate in and out, including Sam. To those on the outside looking in, things between me and Sam looked completely normal. We joked around as frequently as anyone else on set, and never appeared to be more than casual work buddies.

There was a few times when we'd sneak off together. Into a costume closet at work or when hanging out with friends. We'd quietly disappear to the bathroom, our cars, or if we were

really desperate, the alley. But it was mostly mundane fair. Send text, driver to her place, fuck, leave. Receive text, open door, fuck, sleep after she leaves.

We always kept the words to a minimum. The most complex communication between us during our little interludes was calling out plays as we changed position and moaning. After a while it became comfortable. Routine. That was when I should have started to worry.

A year had passed since that Wednesday when I first texted Sam about my boredom. Our affair had lasted longer than most relationships in this town. The show had ended its first season to rousing success and been picked up for a second season. I had gone from a rookie on the writing team to one of its leading members, and was busy planning several characters' arcs for the upcoming season. Sam had finally won the critical acclaim she deserved, and picked up a few awards. Her character in the show was becoming a fan favorite, and Sam planned to spend the off season revitalizing her film career.

Things were good.

The gang stopped going out as much. Without being on set all the time there didn't seem to be much need. We'd hang out a few times a month as opposed to nearly every day. Sam and I seemed to only see each other during our clandestine dances.

I began to wonder how long we could keep it going. We both knew it couldn't go on forever. The longer we played our little game, the higher the chance someone was going to get hurt. Even if we were careful, which let's face it, we never were, someone was going to find out. We were playing with fire, and it was only a matter of time before we burned to death on a pile of our mistakes.

Spring was when it finally happened.

A warm breeze was coming through the window and I was writing. I had been pushing myself far past the point of exhaustion. Hadn't been sleeping well either. Then getting up early and writing more words in a day than anyone should reasonably ask of themselves. It was around midnight when I realized I had been staring at my laptop for a solid four minutes without moving.

My phone vibrated on the coffee table, snapping me out of it.

Text message from Samantha. "I'm bored."

I wanted to go. I really did. The comfort she would bring, the relief of all that stress. But there was work to be done. I still had at least two hours of writing for the show ahead of me

and a morning flight to New York to pitch some scripts of my own. With a responsible, adult sigh I put the phone back on the table, took a sip of my coffee and got back to work.

Fifteen minutes later I get another text.

I stared at the phone in disbelief. Like I had never seen one before. I had this weird knot in the pit of my stomach. It felt like I was in one of those horror movies, where the prank caller keeps calling and you realize maybe it isn't a joke. Maybe there really is a killer inside your house.

I pick up the phone. I have the fleeting hope that it isn't her.

Text message. Samantha. "I'm bored..."

Two dots.

Two dots changed our entire relationship. Dot, dot. My life, her life, the entire damn world as far as I was concerned was now a completely different placed. We had crossed into another dimension. Do not adjust your televisions; you have entered the Twilight Zone. Reality no longer carried with it the same rules.

Dot. Dot.

I sat there, the phone in my hand, the message displayed on the screen. Thoughts of the universe and its strange games dancing and swirling in my head. I damn near threw the phone in shock and fear when it buzzed again.

This time it was a picture message. Sam was in lingerie that can only be described in its level of sexy as coming straight from the Satan collection. A single finger was teasing her lips, her other hand was mid-way down her stomach. Teasing, promising. And those eyes, those damn eyes.

For the first time in our entire relationship I texted her back something other than a time and a place. I told her it wasn't going to happen. Not tonight. I was too tired, had too much work to do. Though I wanted nothing more than to race over there and fall into her arms, I had a long night ahead of me and an early morning flight as reward.

A minute later and I get her reply. It's another picture message. She's forgone Satan's chosen garment of ultimate fertility and instead sent her naked body as messenger. I drop the phone on the couch. I have work to do. I can masturbate to that later.

Thirty five minutes later there's a knock on my door.

The hollow sound echoes through the apartment. I have enough time to wonder if it really happened or was a hallucination before she knocks again. Blood rushes through my veins. Not of passion, but anger, of rage. I stomp across the apartment and rip the door open.

She's smiling, always smiling. Her hair's wet. It must have been raining. I wonder how I didn't hear it through the open window and remember I haven't slept in a very long time. My nose catches a hint of lilac, and honey. I have a momentary flashback of a little green towel. She steps past me. Sam turns around, giving me her best photo shoot pose as she opens the jacket, revealing the pinnacle of Satan's naughty line.

Her grin fades upon seeing the look on my face.

For the first time in our little visits, I start talking.

I tell her I'm sorry. I tell her how lovely she looks, of how great she smells. I tell her I'm tired and I have a plane to catch and there's work to do. I tell her how my fragile little career is relying on what happens in the next twenty four hours and I desperately need to rest. Eventually I run out of words and fall silent, awaiting her response.

I don't know if it was the lack of sleep or all the writing, but in that moment I had the strangest epiphany. I realized how little I actually knew this woman. It's a strange thing to say about a person who's every nook and cranny I had been exploring over the past year, but it was true. Sure I knew her from work, and hanging out with the gang, but the very existence of our affair showed how little that accounted for. I had absolutely no idea how she would react.

My caffeine fueled, sleep deprived writer's brain went into overdrive. It came up with three, fully realized possibilities in under a second, each one playing out before my eyes like a scene in a movie.

Door Number One:

Samantha is the true sociopath everyone suspects she is. She storms out, annoyed at having wasted her time and possibly hurt by the rejection.

Door Number Two:

Samantha is a complete and utter psychopath. I'll see a flash of demon in those dark eyes and realize all too late the monster I've awoken. She'll slap me and scream and break furniture. I've been down that road before. I'd have to use my considerable skills to calm her down, and then file for a restraining order in the morning before my flight. That'd be tricky.

Door Number Three:

Samantha would be sweet and kind and understanding. She'd prove to have been an angel all along. There'd be a real concern in her voice. A soft hand touching my cheek. She'd tell me I worked too much, pushed myself too hard. We'd kiss and she'd leave, telling me to finish my work on the plane and get some rest.

Only door number one was acceptable. That was the only one in which we could possibly continue. Doors Two and Three would lead to the death of our pretend relationship. Door Two for the obvious reasons. Door Three because it would mean things had progressed passed the point of casual and real feelings were involved. There'd be a weight to our actions. Consequences to our mistakes. Someone would get hurt.

And they say three is a magic number. Bullshit.

Sam reached up with a tender hand and caressed my cheek. She gave me a smile that made all my troubles melt away. She said it was okay, kissed me and stepped toward the door to leave.

Maybe it was how tired I was. Maybe it was the stress. Maybe it was that smile or the damn flashback to the towel. All I remember was gripping her fingers with mine as she stepped past. Holding on for dear life because the last thing I wanted was for her to leave. I turned toward her, pulled her back to me. I stared into those brown eyes and I kissed her. My laptop sat forgotten on the table as made our way to bed room.

Sam and I had slow sex before. The kind where you take your time and kiss down each other's bodies and really enjoy the moment. Where your bodies melt together and become two parts of one whole. We had definitely fucked before. Slamming into walls and breaking furniture, thrusting so hard you knew it was only a matter of time before someone tore something.

This was neither. Don't get me wrong, there was a passion to it. But it was more than that. There was a magic to it I had never felt before. It wasn't quite a tenderness, it wasn't that we were more attentive. It was... intimate. Feels strange to use that word with someone I had fucked against a railing in sight of the Eiffel Tower, but it was true. There was an intimacy to it that wasn't there before.

We woke up the next morning in each other's arms. Later we stood at the front door and said our goodbyes. I said we'd have to discuss this when I got back and she agreed. She kissed me, and I kissed her back and she left.

I finished my work on the plane.

We had the talk two days after I got back from New York. I was not looking forward to it. I had been through break ups before, both has the break-er and the break-ee. They were never fun. There tended to be screaming, crying and questions no one could answer. Even at their best they were messy, ugly things. Thankfully this, like many things in our relationship, did not go normally. It wasn't an argument. It was a high level diplomatic exchange between two superpowers. Each went in wanting to come out the victor. Each had massive nuclear arsenals at their disposal. Each was secretly worried about being hurt, taken advantage of.

The problem as that neither one of us knew what we wanted. It would have been easy if we simply wanted to end the relationship. Then it's simple a matter over saying it's over and going your separate ways. This was far trickier. It was like trying to diffuse a bomb when your color blind and didn't have hands. We were infants surrounded by mouse traps, crawling in the dark in search of treasure.

We negotiated and gave counter proposals. There were presentations, questions and endless smothering of loop holes. Everything was contested, every inch of the battlefield claimed and mapped out. When things got too heated, when words were yelled in anger and tempers were running short we'd have wild animalistic sex. We'd find ourselves lying naked on the floor, panting in the summer heat. When she looked too adorable, passing back in forth in my apartment, hands frantically gesturing as she rushed to explain her latest idea, I'd wrap her in my arms and hold her close. We'd hold each other and dance to silent music. When it grew too tiring we would collapse onto the couch and cuddle. Her head on my chest, my hand stroking her hair.

We discussed continuing our present arrangement and knew it would be impossible. We discussed being friends, and wondered how we would prevent ending up in the same place. And we discussed a relationship, boy did we discuss that.

She was an actress and would be required to kiss other men from time to time. I didn't really care about that, I knew how the business worked and how awkward those scenes could be for actors. But nudity, and sex scenes? That was different. If we were dating I wanted her to be, you know, mine. Yeah it's possessive and jealous and juvenile and messed up, but it's who I am. I asked if she would be okay giving up some opportunities for the good of the relationship.

She countered with my work. I'd been traveling a lot, and if these deals in New York took off I could be spending a lot of time there. If Sam and I were to be in a real relationship, she wanted to know she would be able to get to spend time with me. She wondered how much of our relationship would be long distance and if all our talks would be through computers or phones. She wanted to be able to know that after a long day at work she could come home and curl up in arms. Would I be okay with passing up opportunities?

It left us with few options. In this industry one missed chance can be all it takes to put your career into inevitable decline. Could we take that risk, be okay when one of our careers took the hit and the others didn't? Would we go public? It could affect both our jobs at the show. The tabloids would have a field day. What about the future? Could I ever see myself getting married? Did she want kids?

I asked if I could ever use anything from the relationship in my writing, bits and pieces, nothing she could ever be identified with. I really liked the way she whispered in my ear in New York, how that whole scene had played out and thought about putting it in a movie. She agreed as long as I let her put whatever she wanted in a tell all book she was planning to write when she retired. I told her I didn't care.

Round after round we went for three whole days locked in that apartment. In the end we decided we have been damn lucky to go through everything we did and still remain friends. We weren't meant for a relationship, and that was okay, not everyone is. The important thing was no one had gotten hurt. We should get out while we were ahead.

It was strangely uplifting, having actually made a decision. Sad sure, but at least we were able to get out from under all that weight. We ordered Chinese food and promised we would make a better effort to talk in our real lives. Maybe even become actual friends. We joked about how much it would suck to not get that regular sex fix we were used to. And that was when we came up with what sounded like the most brilliant thing ever devised. We had fought a long and bloody war, and every war needed a peace treaty.

Once a year we could send out a diplomatic cable. Our old battle cry of "I'm bored." The same rules of honorable combat applied. If the recipient of the message was up for it, they would text back with a time and a location. We would each get one message a year, to use whenever we wanted. That gave us room to relive our affair twice a year.

All complications and loop holes were ironed out. It was decided that it would apply to the calendar year, so you could use it in November and then again in January. If the recipient was sick, in a relationship or otherwise incapable of meeting, they would text back "refund" saving the sender from wasting their message. We wondered what would happen if both accidentally sent it in the same day. If both parties sent the message within three days then a general refund would be issued, and both senders would get to keep their message. To ensure that didn't result in us ending up back here, we decided the treaty wouldn't go into effect for six months. It would give us some distance, a chance to move on.

The last question, posed by Sam, was how long the treaty would remain active. I shrugged and said forever, as all peace treaties should. She agreed. We had planned to shake

on our master stroke of diplomacy, but decided it was only fitting to seal the deal with one last roll in the hay.

During those sixth months, we only broke the ceasefire once and that was during the first week. We had a moment of weakness after hanging out with friends and decided it was worth the risk. We settled into a pattern approaching normalcy after that. The show started its second season to record numbers. I landed my first movie deal. Samantha stopped being a second stringer in our after-hours group and became a core member. We became actual friends and occasionally hung out apart from the group. Her little green towel I was so fond of became ratty and worn over the many months since this all began. She called me before throwing it out and we had a little funeral for it.

Damn I miss that thing.

I found myself giddy with excitement as the sixth month mark approached. It was like an upcoming holiday. Sam and I had both been on a few dates during the ceasefire but nothing had developed into a relationship. I thought for sure she would text me. But the day came and went, and I received no text. I thought about texting her, but decided better of it. We had our fun and no one got hurt. I figured we should be happy with that. It was time to move on.

As most friends do these days, Sam and I texted back and forth about normal things rather often. Every time I saw a new message from her I'd have this half second of hope that it'd be our secret message. I don't know why I didn't text her. I guess I was always one to let the ladies make the first move. Didn't want to pressure her.

It wasn't until October when my prayers were answered. It was a quiet, cold day. A massive front had rolled in, convincing most people to stay inside. She texted me. I set the time. She came over, we had sex. It was a little awkward at first, but we soon found our old rhythm. I opened the window and let the cold cool our bodies as we cuddled after. Unlike before, there was no mad rush by either party to leave. Instead we snuggled under the covers and talked. It was nice.

I used mine a few days after Christmas. The year was almost over and they don't stack, so I figured what the hell. The sex was particularly good. Maybe the winter frost had given us further incentive to stay active.

The years drifted by.

We both grew older and our careers more hectic. Sam won more awards and I finally got my dream show on the air. Before I knew it I was sitting in a pew at her wedding. A year later and she was a face among many at mine. She won the race though, cause my marriage fell apart first. I never should have gotten married, I can see that clearly now. I still wonder why I couldn't see it then. Sam's marriage fell apart almost two years later. Her husband, another actor, had been caught cheating with another actress.

The tabloids were all over her. Sam decided it was time for a break from acting and to withdraw from public life for a while. I had moved out of the city during my divorce and up into the country side. It was a quiet little place down a winding road. Sam asked if she could stay there for a while and I said yes without a second thought. It was fall, and well frankly, both our lives were a mess. Something about the smell of dying leaves hanging in the air that makes you want to wrap your arms around something familiar.

Anyway, that went on for several months. Her broken marriage blew over and she found a new apartment in the city. We spent her last morning at my place having a nice, quiet breakfast. I remember getting this idea as she was leaving. She was carrying her bag to the door. I waited till it was open to text her.

“I’m bored.”

She shot me this look, a kind of “Really?” with that soft smile of hers. I went over and kissed her. Kissed her like a man half my age would. I kissed her so well she dropped the bag. I shut the door and asked her to move in with me.

Three months later we were engaged. The following year we got married. We were very specific about the date. It was ten years to the day of that first message. We were getting older, but still felt young at heart. Even managed to pop out two kids. They were accidents, but hell, our entire relationship was.

We didn’t mind. It was a long road, and one we never intended to take. We couldn’t have been happier with how things turned out.